

FORM B - BUILDING

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
Office of the Secretary, State House, Boston

In Area no.  
K

Form no.  
442



wn Lexington

dress 36 Forest Street

me Abram C. Washburn House

esent use Dwelling

esent owner George C Barry

scription:

e c. 1885

Source map, genealogy research

le Stick style

after published design by

Architect Frank D. Nichols, Bridgeport, CT.

White clapboard, shingles

Exterior wall fabric (scalloped & square), stick trim

Outbuildings (describe) Barn left rear.

Other features Brick foundation; off-center door to right, tower above. Three narrow windows front second floor, stick trusswork gable, . Cross gabled, Barn - left rear, shed off back.

Altered two stories added Date 1896

Moved \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

5. Lot size:

15750 ft.<sup>2</sup>

One acre or less \_\_\_\_\_ Over one acre \_\_\_\_\_

Approximate frontage 66'

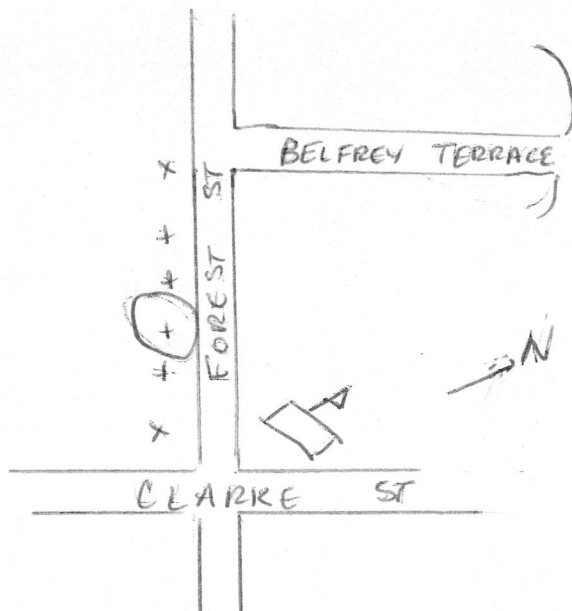
Approximate distance of building from street  
25'

6. Recorded by Barbara C. Stewart; Anne Grady

Organization Lexington Historical Commission

Date April 22, 1976; April, 1984

4. Map. Draw sketch of building location in relation to nearest cross streets and other buildings. Indicate north.



DO NOT WRITE IN THIS SPACE  
USGS Quadrant \_\_\_\_\_

MHC Photo no. \_\_\_\_\_

(over)

7. Original owner (if known) Abram C. Washburn

Original use \_\_\_\_\_

Subsequent uses (if any) and dates \_\_\_\_\_

8. Themes (check as many as applicable)

Aboriginal	_____	Conservation	_____	Recreation	_____
Agricultural	_____	Education	_____	Religion	_____
Architectural	_____	Exploration/ settlement	_____	Science/ invention	_____
The Arts	_____	Industry	_____	Social/ humanitarian	_____
Commerce	_____	Military	_____	Transportation	_____
Communication	_____	Political	_____		
Community development	<u>x</u>				

9. Historical significance (include explanation of themes checked above)

Abram C. Washburn, Lexington's most prolific late-nineteenth century builder/contractor, and his family owned this house from before 1889 until the 1940s. Washburn was born in Vermont in 1853 and educated in Orford, New Hampshire. He came to Lexington in 1884 and very likely built this house shortly thereafter, at first as a one-story cottage (he added two stories in 1896).

In 1885 the Lexington Minute Man enters the first of many references to construction work being carried out by Washburn. If the newspaper accounts are an accurate reflection, Washburn built many more houses than his next nearest competitor.

Many of Washburn's houses were built speculatively. He built speculative housing in the Parker/Forest area, on Bloomfield Street, and on Winthrop Road, and is the only contractor to have done so on Meriam Hill. The source of Washburn's house designs, except for his own house and that of G.S. Norris, has not been documented. Very likely he purchased some designs and modified others or created them himself. The house at 6 Glen Road, built speculatively by Washburn, for instance, is repeated exactly on Forest Street (builder unknown) and on Grove Street in Newton. This would seem to indicate a published source. Washburn's houses are fairly standard Colonial Revival or Shingle Style Vernacular/Queen Anne designs. The latter ones tend to have similar cross gable profiles and asymmetrical massing and are characteristically trimmed on the second level with staggered butt shingles. The house at 24 Clarke Street, for example, has a nearly identical plan but different finishes from that at 86 Bloomfield Street.

(see Continuation Sheet)

10. Bibliography and/or references (such as local histories, deeds, assessor's records, early maps, etc.)

Hudson, Charles. History of the Town of Lexington, revised and continued to 1912 by the Lexington Historical Society, Volume II, p. 723. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1913.

Lexington Minute Man, November 27, 1885, May 7, 1886, May 21, 1886, May 27, 1887, September 23, 1887, May 5, 1891, August 28, 1891, September 19, 1891, September 26, 1891, January 22, 1892, April 29, 1892, April 28, 1893, July 20, 1894, August 3, 1894, September 21, 1894, November 23, 1894, April 3, 1896, August 8, 1896, December 4, 1896.

(see Continuation Sheet)

## INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
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Community:

Lexington

Form No:

442

Property Name: 36 Forest Street

Indicate each item on inventory form which is being continued below.

## HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

Washburn also built for others from architects' designs (e.g. 2 Oakland Street, 20 Percy Road). The following is a partial list of buildings built by Washburn:

- 36 Forest Street, c. 1885, 1896
- 38 Forest Street, c. 1885 ?
- 8 Raymond Street, 1885
- 16 Clarke Street, 1896
- 24 Clarke Street, 1886
- 2 Oakland Street, 1894
- 27 Oakland Street, 1887
- 3 Chandler Street, 1895
- 4 Chandler Street, c. 1900
- 6 Chandler Street, c. 1900
- 4 Glen Road, c. 1900
- 9 Winthrop Road, c. 1900
- 86 Bloomfield Street, 1894
- 10 Stratham Road, 1894
- 26 Parker Street, date unknown
- 25 Parker Street, date unknown
- 20 Percy Road, date unknown

## ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

This house began as a one-story cottage. In 1896 two additional stories were added by the owner, contractor Abram C. Washburn. In 1887 Washburn built a house at 39 Highland Avenue for G.S. Norris. He chose to use the same design for the enlargement of his own house nine years later.

The design was published in the Supplement to the Scientific American-Architects and Builders Edition of October 1886 under the title "An \$1800 Dwelling designed by Frank D. Nichols, Bridgeport, Conn." (see accompanying illustration). Scientific American published from 1880 to 1905 a monthly magazine intended to inform the public about good building practices and modern construction techniques. It became by the mid-1880s the builder's magazine with the largest circulation in the world. Each month the magazine published color plates and specifications for two buildings. Washburn or Norris must have had access to this publication, and Washburn must have translated the illustration into the actual buildings. While room dimensions are given in the plans, there is only a perspective drawing to show the configuration of the elevations. Evidently it was not possible to order working drawings, as was the case with some designs published in the late nineteenth century.

Washburn's house is a near copy of the illustration. Although he does not include the oculus windows, he does apply the stickwork as shown and uses areas of patterned shingles and diagonal flush boarding as indicated between the stickwork. He chose to use staggered butt shingles on the gables and hexagonal ones on the tower rather than the suggested hexagonal ones only. The porch of the house has been enclosed and glazed. Very likely the porch looked

(see Continuation Sheet)

Staple to Inventory form at bottom

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## ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE (continuation sheet 2)

originally like that of the house at 39 Highland Avenue which retains trim similar to that shown in the illustration including the diagonal stickwork under the raking eave at the end of the porch.

It is useful to have this documentation of the source of one of Washburn's designs. Washburn built a number of houses on speculation and may have copied or purchased designs for the others from similar sources. A check of all issues of the Scientific American-Architects and Builders Edition should be undertaken to determine if Washburn used more designs illustrated in the magazine.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

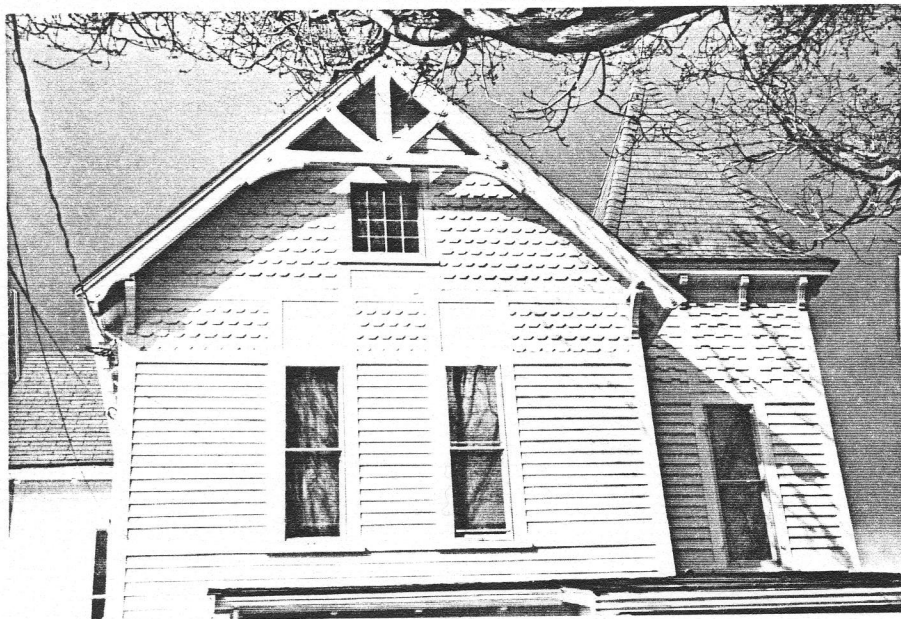
Mitchell, Eugene, compiler. American Victoriana. San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1979.

Personal communication from S. Lawrence Whipple.

1889 atlas

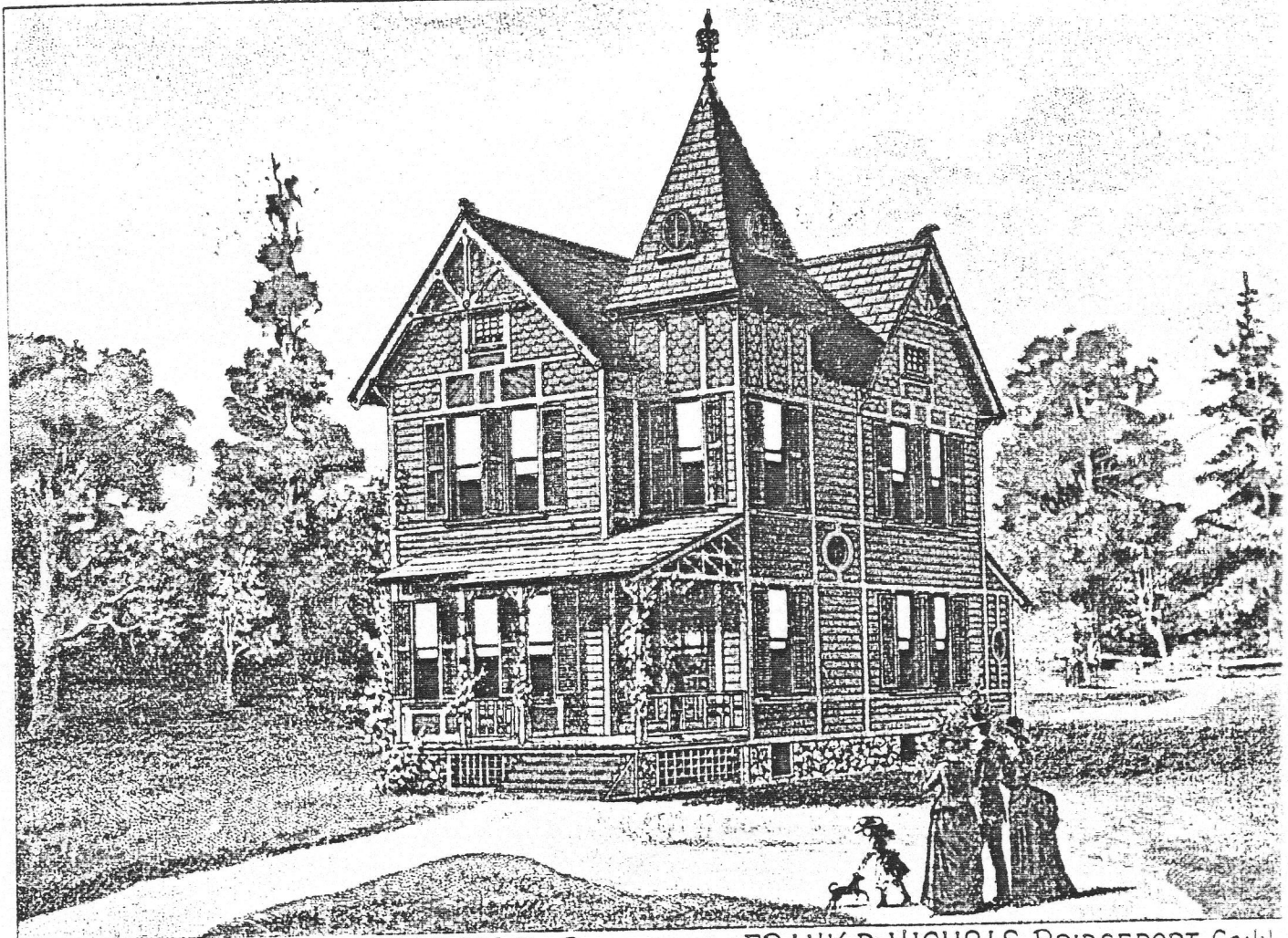
1898 atlas

1887 Directory



A. C. WASHBURN,  
Carpenter AND Builder.  
Work done by the Day or Contract.  
JOBGING OF ALL KINDS  
Done at shortest notice.  
SATISFACTION GUARANTEED.  
Residence, Forest St., Lexington, Mass.  
1887

Staple to Inventory form at bottom



AN \$1800 DWELLING - DESIGNED BY FRANK D. NICHOLS, BRIDGEPORT, CONN.

